It was little Freddy with a bunch of charming cluster roses, just gathered. p. 33.

# SEVENTY TIMES SEVEN,

OR

# THE LAW OF KINDNESS,

ILLUSTRATING

THE FIFTH PETITION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER,

"FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS, AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS."

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## THE LAW OF KINDNESS.

### CHAPTER I.

"FATHER," said Frank Elmer, as he looked up from his books, "will you help me in my lessons a little? I have met with such hard words in it, that I think they must have been put there on purpose to vex me. What a bother this Latin is!"

Frank's father was busily engaged in writing; so he only glanced over the desk at his son, and, without noticing his petulant manner, said very quietly,

"Presently, Frank."

Now Frank was not what was called a bad boy. Indeed he generally merited the opposite title as a relative distinction; for, as an abstract quality, we know "there is none good, no, not one." But he was not vicious or mischievous; was generally kind and obliging to his companions, affectionate and dutiful to his parents.

Yet he had one great fault, which, if suffered to remain unchecked in youth, leads to grievous sin and life-long unhappiness—that of a fretful and impatient temper. He was one of those who can bear, if called upon, a mountain load of affliction, but whose spirit chafes and frets beneath a feather's weight of the trifling cares and perplexities of life.

With one of those minor evils the

spirit of Frank was then burdened. He had not only lost his place in his class at school that day from want of accuracy in his recitations; but he had encountered a fresh array of difficulties in the lesson to be prepared, which seemed to him insurmountable.

It was besides such a pleasant afternoon —the soft breath of summer came in so invitingly through the shaded windows —the birds twittered so sweetly in the thick leafy branches of the trees—that he felt like a prisoner as he bent unwillingly over his tasks. He almost thought himself aggrieved to be obliged to con such wearisome lessons; and his father's quiet "presently, Frank," was a new source of irritation; for he had thought he should be attended to at once, if he made known his perplexity.

This was all wrong in Frank. Had he been one of those, who, with aspiring minds, after the toils of the day are past, steal from sleep the precious moment for acquiring knowledge; had he been that bright-eyed youth, who, deprived of other means to secure warmth to his chilled limbs, gathers his scanty bed blankets around his crouching form, as he pores over the hardly-earned volume, that is to unlock for him the temple of science; or that ingenious mechanic, who places his book beside his work-bench, that he may catch hasty drops from that sea of knowledge for which his soul is athirst—then he would have better appreciated the comfortable circumstances by which he was surrounded—have sooner learned the great lesson of self-reliance.

Frank's father possessed a beautiful

country residence, at just such a distance from the crowded city, as to mingle its luxuries and refinement with the quiet and "dignified leisure" which his tastes demanded. A pleasant room in the rear of the dwelling had been fitted up as a study; and there, surrounded by his favourite authors, and his senses cheered and delighted by the lovely sights and sounds of nature, Mr. Elmer passed many happy hours. Frank had all the privileges of the place. His father was never so well pleased, as when his little son was seated beside him; either engaged in his studies, or conversing with him on interesting subjects.

But Frank was that afternoon in no mood for enjoyment. He felt vexed with himself and all around him. And as he had fully made up his mind that he could

not study without assistance, he determined to be as annoying as possible. Having closed his dictionary with quite a decided air, and pushing it with his other books as far from him as he could, he began rolling up his exercise book into a trumpet, through which he sent forth most discordant sounds.

Mr. Elmer raised his eyes once or twice to his son with a silent look of reproof; but finding that Frank paid no attention, and after a while began to accompany his music by drumming with his fists on the table, his father ended his amusement by desiring him to be quiet or leave the room.

As Frank hurriedly rose to obey, he accidentally upset his father's inkstand; and saw to his dismay, that the papers on which he had been so busily employed, were entirely ruined.

"Indeed, indeed, father, I did not intend to do it," said Frank with a look of consternation, as he watched the dark fluid spreading itself over the fair manuscript; "I am very, very sorry."

"I believe that you did not deliberately intend doing it, Frank," said his father; "but your ill-temper and impatience have been the cause of it: and now I shall not only lose much valuable time, but you will be obliged to study your lesson alone; for I cannot help you as I intended to do. So carry your books to another table; and do not leave the room until I give you permission.

As his father spoke decidedly, and Frank was really sorry for the accident, he obeyed promptly this time; and, being really a fine scholar, soon surmounted the seeming difficulties of his lesson. But

"the good feeling" did not come when this was accomplished. He felt angry that he was obliged to remain there, when everything looked so beautiful without; and yet if he had been allowed to seek his pleasures elsewhere, he would still have been unhappy, for he carried the root of bitterness with him.

As he turned to the open window, where the branches of a magnificent elm swayed lightly in the soft breeze, a tame robin came and took its accustomed perch there; and, turning its bright glance sideways to him, seemed to trill from its tuneful throat the words: "Come, Frank, be merry and pleasant like me."

But Frank did not feel merry and pleasant at all. Instead of whistling to the pretty little songster as usual, and amusing himself with its shy advance

and retreat, as it hopped lightly from branch and twig, the ill-tempered boy turned silently and sullenly away. But something in the garden beyond seemed to restore energy to his motions; for, after a bewildered gaze, and a half-uttered exclamation, he suddenly sprang through the open window and disappeared.

To understand the scene that followed, it will be necessary to explain a little. Frank was not an only child. Besides a sister older than himself, and some dear ones early taken to a world of perfect bliss, Frank had a sweet little brother; one of those pale delicate blossoms that twine so endearingly around parents' hearts. Little Freddy had been lame from infancy; was often in pain and very ill; and his friends observed anxiously that the rose of health never mantled

his pallid cheeks; that his eyes were often heavy and mournful in their expression.

Yet Freddy had his moments of quiet enjoyment. He would remain for hours with his little Bible open on his knees, reading earnestly the beautiful story of the cross—of the babe of Bethlehem—of the man of sorrows—of the risen Saviour. Sometimes with a happy smile on his parted lips, and his gentle eyes closed as if in sleep, he sat among the shadows of the blossoming trees, and let the soft winds play with his clustering hair. They said he was dreaming then. It may be that he listened to the angel-harps by the still waters—to the ever-present voice that whispered: "Come up hither."

Then Freddy was a passionate ad-

mirer of flowers. He loved to watch the bursting buds, as, beneath the wondrous alchemy of nature, the tiny flower cups unclasped their green fingers, and were transmuted into blossoms more beautiful than gems. All that were fragrant and lowly were his favourites; even the humble golden-cups, that were flung so freely like glittering coin over the green bosom of the earth.

Frank too was a lover of flowers. But it was ever the brightest and gayest kinds that delighted him. The magnificent dahlia—the queenly camellia—and all the beautifully rare variety of other costly exotics had untiring charms for him. He was at that time cultivating a brilliant show of tulips in a plot of ground that his father had given him; and it was this cherished spot that his eyes had

sought when he stood in such unfriendliness with himself and all the world.

What were his astonishment and grief, then, to see his favourite flowers trampled and broken to the ground; and little Freddy on his knees, with his crutches thrown behind him, employed, as the excited Frank thought, in rapidly completing the work of their destruction!

Now Frank dearly loved his gentle little brother. Most of his pleasures were in some way connected with him, and he would often leave those sports which were active and lively, to join in the quiet amusements best suited to his invalid condition. To sketch pictures for Freddy, to draw him in his little carriage, to sit for hours by his side, fashioning with his knife wooden horses and sleds for his especial delight—these

were acts of kindness that Frank never tired of. And in return he possessed a large share of that full fountain of love, which, beneath the calm of quiet natures, ever flows most strongly and deeply.

Had Frank paused to think, he would have seen how improbable it was that one, who lived in such an atmosphere of peace, should be guilty of such an act of wanton mischief. But there is no reason in passion; and before reflection came, the impetuous boy had reached the spot, and not only assailed the unconscious offender with harsh and opprobrious epithets, but striking a fierce blow on his fair forehead, crushed him down among the flowers; thereby causing a wider and more irremediable ruin.

Scarcely had the insane act been completed, ere Frank was himself again;

recalled to better feelings more speedily perhaps by the tenderly beseeching gaze of Freddy's loving eyes, than by the warning voice of his father, commanding him to forbear; and before Mr. Elmer could reach the spot, Frank had tenderly raised his little brother, and pressing him in his arms, sobbed words of remorse and unavailing sorrow in his ears.

"Frank! Frank!" cried his father, reprovingly, "when will you learn to curb your hasty temper? Are you much hurt, Freddy?"

"O no, father, not much; only sorry—so very sorry for Frank. See his poor flowers! they are all broken and destroyed."

"And, if I am not mistaken, you have been trying to restore them in some measure to their former beauty; is it not

so, Freddy?—and Frank, in his mad passion, mistook your kindness for an attempt to injure him. Look, Frank; here are the marks of an animal's foot on all the garden beds. Some strange dog has ventured in; and, scenting a mole or some other vermin beneath the soil where your flowers grew, has thus uprooted and destroyed them."

"Yes, father," said Freddy, "that was it. The garden gate was wide open, and a great black dog was busily scratching up Frank's bed, when I came down the walk to get a sight of his tulips. I knew that Frank would be sorry; and so I was trying to set them up again as well as I could."

"You see," said Mr. Elmer, turning to his eldest son, who stood sorrowfully gazing on the work of destruction, "what your impetuous haste and passion have

led you into. You have not only been unjust and unkind to your little brother; but you have deprived yourself of the treasures, which might have remained to you out of the wreck of your flowers."

"I have been very wicked, indeed, father," said Frank. "But I don't care for the flowers now—though they *were* beautiful, father—if only I had not struck dear little Freddy. I hope he will forgive me, and you also; for I can scarcely forgive myself."

"Ask God to forgive you, my dear son;" said his father with emotion. "Go, retire by yourself; and when you have had time to think the matter over, I will come and talk with you."

So Mr. Elmer, taking little Freddy in his arms, proceeded further down the garden walk; while Frank returned slowly and sorrowfully to the house.

## CHAPTER II.

He had sat some time with his hands over his eyes in bitter repentance, when his father's step was heard; and Mr. Elmer, removing a large Bible from his study table, laid it open before Frank at an engraving, which portrayed the scene of the first murder. The dark look of hate that scowled from the brow of Cain—the suppliant countenance of his innocent victim—had been well expressed by the artist; and Frank covered his eyes again with a shudder.

"O father!" said he in a low voice, "did I look like that when I struck Freddy?"

"Somewhat indeed, Frank," said Mr. Elmer. "I never see two boys in just such an attitude, without likening the sight in my own mind to that deadly affray, which was the first fatal result of the entrance of sin into our world. Since then, how many times has that awful scene been acted over again! the hand of man turned against his fellow-man, in direct defiance of that blessed law of the divine Redeemer: 'Love one another.'"

"Father," said Frank, "has not that sometimes been called the eleventh commandment?"

"It has, my son; or it might be called the fulfilling of all the commandments; for if we love the Lord our God with all our hearts and souls and strength, as we are enjoined in the first table of the law, this divine love will so operate, as to cause

the obligations of those commandments which relate to our fellow men to be more easily observed. In other words—if we feel in our own hearts the joy of pardoned sin, we will be more ready to forgive the trespasses of others."

"That is what we say in the Lord's prayer, father," said Frank, "'Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.'"

"And do you feel as you say, Frank? Would you have God to forgive you in just such measure as you forgive the debts or sins of others against you?"

"Father," said Frank, after he had paused to think; for he knew his father would not be satisfied with a hasty reply on such an important subject; "you know I am but a little boy; and though I sometimes quarrel with my schoolmates, yet it is soon made up again and forgotten;

so that I don't think I know what it is to have enemies, or to forgive them."

Happy childhood! thought Mr. Elmer; may you ever be kept unspotted from the hate, and ill will, and evil nature of man. "Yet, Frank, if you always acted from such a principle of love, you would not be guilty of such deeds of violence as that you committed this afternoon."

"O father," said Frank, "I was in such a passion that I did not stop to think. And my flowers had cost me such a world of trouble. There were the *Semper Augustus* and the beautiful *Vice-Roi;* I had watched them ever since the first streak of colour came through the green buds, and then to see them all broken down in the dust! I hardly knew what I did; I believe I scarcely saw dear

little Freddy till I struck him down, and then I was so sorry. I hope I shall never be so passionate and hasty again."

"I hope you will not indeed, Frank," said his father; "for an unruly and passionate temper leads to much evil. Not only does it make its possessor wretched, but it causes great unhappiness to others. It is besides the feeling that leads to murder, and is classed by our Saviour in his sermon on the mount with that deadly sin; anger with a brother without a cause being the same in his eyes with taking that brother's life. So you see in the sight of God it is no excuse to say: 'I was angry, and did not intend to do it.' The being angry at all is a transgression of the law of God—that perfect law, which is not satisfied with the outward observance, but searches the heart."

"Father," said Frank, "the boys at school call us mean and cowardly if we don't fight back again when they begin a quarrel; and say they wouldn't be such pitiful sneaks for all the world."

"Such," said Mr. Elmer, "is the code of honour most acceptable to the unrenewed heart. But, as it was once most beautifully observed, 'If it is manly to resent an injury, it is godlike to forgive it.' And he is the greater coward who, fearing to incur the world's dread censure, shuns not to infringe the law of God. In proportion as the heart renewed by grace becomes moulded into the image of Christ, will his gentle precepts of peace and good will to men prevail to the uprooting of malice, ill-will, envy, and hatred. In this blessed book," continued Mr. Elmer, turning over the leaves of the Bible, "we

have many lessons and examples to enable us to judge if our conduct and feelings are well-pleasing in the sight of God. One of these illustrations you will find in the gospel by Matthew; where our Saviour gives an instance of the unforgiving nature of man, in contrast with that free and full forgiveness, which God in Christ offers to us, miserable offenders. Will you read it, Frank?"

When Frank had read the parable of the two debtors in Matt. xviii. 21–35; and his father had explained that "the certain king" represents the King of heaven, and all mankind the debtors, Frank asked what was the reason that Peter enquired about the number of times he should forgive his brother.

"Peter had reference, no doubt," said his father, "to the usage under the old

dispensation of the law, when if a man forgave his fellow once or twice it was thought sufficient. He, thinking that the new dispensation of love and mercy required something more, was willing to extend it to seven times. But our Saviour said, 'Not only seven times, but seventy times seven;' or as many times as it should be required. So that, in the divine spirit of charity, there is to be no limit to our forgiving each other's trespasses; even as the grace of God towards us is unbounded. Now, Frank, you said a while ago that you had no enemies to forgive. We will then suppose that the number of times you may be called upon to forgive great offences in others, will be very few compared with the seventy times seven acts of kindness that you have opportunity to offer every day of

your life. Pleasant looks, kind words, little trials and calls for forbearance, that happen each hour of our existence, make us ready to encounter greater difficulties. And as we ask for pardon for our own short-comings, we will be ready to exercise the same forbearance to the faults of others. A heart fresh from experiencing the forgiveness of its sins, will be far from delighting in that bitterness, and wrath, and clamour, and evil speaking which are *not* the fruits of the Spirit."

Mr. Elmer then directed the attention of his little son to such passages as these:

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and

persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?" Matt. v. 43–47.

"Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another." Rom. xii. 10.

"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; . . . hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do

such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another." Gal. v. 19—21, 26.

"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice. And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Eph. iv. 31, 32.

"Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Do all things without murmurings and disputings." Phil. ii. 3, 4, 14.

"Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." Col. iii. 13.

"But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men." 1 Thes. iv. 9. v. 15.

"If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." Jam. i. 26.

"Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts,

glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace." Jam. iii. 13—18.

"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death." 1 John iii. 14.

"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love

one another. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" 1 John iv. 10, 11, 20.

"Father," said Frank, when he had finished reading these texts, "wouldn't it be nice for me to write these verses down in a little book, so that I may have them all together? And perhaps they will make me more mindful of being loving and forgiving through the day."

"Yes, Frank," said his father; "I think it would be a very good plan. Here is a blank memorandum book in my table drawer; and I will place slips of white paper between the leaves of the Bible, so that you may not have to look for the texts; and you may write them down now, while I proceed with the employment you have so often interrupted."

Frank took his father's ruler, and marked his little book with a black line through the middle of the pages, so that he might write his texts in two columns. He then headed them with these words—"Rules to make me kind and forgiving through the day;"—and busily proceeded with his task.

He had just finished, and was looking over them to see how they all read together, when the pattering of little feet was heard—a soft hand touched his—and the sweet breath of flowers was wafted towards him. Frank looked up. It was little Freddy, with a bunch of charming cluster-roses just gathered.

"These are for you, Frank;" said the sweet child. "Roses from my own pretty tree. It shall be yours now. I will call it 'Frank's cluster-rose.'"

Frank took the roses, and burst into tears.

"What is it?" said Mr. Elmer, coming forward from his seat at the far end of the room.

"Only Freddy, father," said Frank, smiling through his tears; "he has been heaping coals of fire on my head."

"O father, I haven't done any such thing," said Freddy, with a look of astonishment. "I wouldn't like to. It would burn all Frank's pretty curls off."

Mr. Elmer smiled at the earnest manner of the child; and taking him in his arms, explained that Frank alluded to that text in Rom. xii. 20, where the apostle exhorts those having enemies to do them all the good in their power, and thus bring them to repentance.

"Frank meant by this," said his father,

"that your kind and forgiving actions made him much more sorry for his fault, than if you had been cross and ill-tempered in return for his unkindness."

"But, father, I don't want Frank to feel so. I only thought I would give him my rose tree to keep him from being sorry about his poor flowers. But I will not call it 'Frank's tree,' if it is to make him always sad when he looks at it."

"Yes, dear Freddy," said Frank; "you must let me have the rose tree. Or it shall be yours and mine too; and then when we look at it, we will both remember to be kind and forgiving."

"Ever think and act thus, my dear boys," said their father, folding his two fair sons in his arms; "and then you will, I trust, be in some degree like the compassionate and forgiving Saviour."

## CHAPTER III.

FRANK arose the next morning, feeling as gay and happy as his little friend the robin, who sung its daily welcome beneath his window. He had confessed his sin to his heavenly Father before he retired to rest; and implored help from above, to enable him to resist temptation. And, having renewed his petitions, and made himself quite ready to obey his father's first call, he sat down at the window, and looked over the texts he had written out the day before. When he had done this, and thought a while over their meaning, he gave himself up to the balmy influences of the morning.

Everything looked charming to Frank; because he felt at peace, and disposed to be pleased with all around him.

As he leaned from the window, he began to think thus:

"Seventy times seven kind actions to be done every day! But whom am I to be kind to now? for I think I must have got up an hour too soon; there seems to be no one stirring. Oh yes; I see old Peter the gardener coming along with his heavy watering can—I wonder if I couldn't help him. To be sure he is cross sometimes, and scolds me a good deal; but then I believe I worry him too. Perhaps if I speak gently and pleasantly, it may make him kind; at any rate I will try."

So Frank ran hastily down stairs, and entered the garden in such a hurry, that

he almost overset old Peter, who had just stooped to fill his can from a vessel that stood near. The old man turned with an angry word on his lip, but Frank hastened to apologize.

"Please to excuse me, Peter. I was trying to see how fast I could run, and I overshot the mark a little. Will you let me help you to water the flowers? You may just sit down there and rest; and I will do it nicely."

"Thank you, master Frank, you are very kind," said old Peter, quite softened by the cheerful tones and pleasant look of the boy; "my old hands do tremble a good deal with lifting that heavy can. So, if you choose, you may go round a little, while I sit down."

Having seen the old man take a comfortable position on the side of his wheel-

barrow, which, loaded with tools, stood at one end of the gravel walk, Frank began his rounds; dispensing the genial shower to each thirsty plant. Meanwhile Peter sat with wondering eyes; for Frank had seldom spoken to him, except to claim his help, or tease him for seeds and slips; favours which the old man had been often slow to grant, merely because he had not been asked in a right and proper manner.

"And now, Peter," said Frank, when he had finished his task; "what is there next to be done? Can't I help you some more?"

"No, I thank you, master Frank," said Peter; "I am quite rested now. You may sit here and talk to me, if you choose, while I clip the grass from the borders." And the old man, taking a

heavy pair of garden shears from his basket, began to cut the fresh green grass away from the beds.

"Well," said Frank, "if I am to sit here, I might as well be reading a little to you. Wouldn't you like that, Peter?"

The old man assented; and Frank, taking his little book from his pocket, proceeded to read aloud the texts which it contained.

Peter listened attentively; often quite stopping in his work, while he turned with interest to hear the gentle precepts taught by the religion of Jesus.

"That is very pretty," said he, when Frank had done. "Couldn't you read a little more, master Frank?"

"I have no more here, Peter," said Frank; "but I can soon run for my little Bible." And as quickly as possible he

hastened back; and continued reading different portions of scripture to his eager listener until the breakfast bell rang, and he was obliged to stop.

Now old Peter had often before heard the words of inspiration. He had even spelled them over to himself on the long winter evenings by the aid of glasses to his dim and failing sight; but somehow the word read had not profited him; it was a dead letter, needing the quickening power of God's Holy Spirit. Old Peter was not a christian. He presented that most pitiable of human objects,— a hoary-headed sinner standing on the brink of eternity, without a well-founded hope in Christ of a blessed immortality—of life eternal beyond the grave. But now he seemed to listen with a new interest to the word of God. It came like a strain

of long forgotten music to his ears. It brought back the far distant past—when a little child he stood at his mother's knee, and learned of Jesus—when a giddy youth God's Spirit knocked at the door of his hard heart, and he had repulsed the heavenly stranger. But now his heart, softened by kindness, opened to receive the message of grace; and he heard again the voice which calls evermore: "Return, return unto me."

When Frank ran out again after breakfast, he was surprised and delighted to see that the unsightly wreck of withered flowers had been removed from his bed, and their place supplied by some of the rarest and most beautiful productions of the garden; a circumstance more unexpected because the old gardener had hitherto refused him those very plants,

although he had been extremely anxious to possess them.

"So much for being kind and obliging," said Mr. Elmer, to whom Frank related the circumstance; "you will never find a good action lose its reward. Always make this law your guide through life—*the law of kindness.*"

"And I must be kind and forgiving in school too, I suppose," said Frank, who was gathering his books together, and buckling on his little leathern satchel.

"Certainly, my son. All mankind are members of one great family; and to get along pleasantly and peaceably with the world, we must be careful to observe *the law of kindness.* One of your texts tells you not to prefer yourself, (Rom. xii. 10,) and there is another which I think I did not point out to you: "Be courteous."

(1 Pet. iii. 8.) Two excellent rules for you to carry with you through the day, Frank."

But Frank was not without his little trials at school. Although mostly a favourite on account of his generous and obliging disposition, yet the faults of his hasty temper brought him into many difficulties; and there were not wanting occasions of "provoking him to wrath" by those who "make a mock at sin."

Among these and the most trying to Frank's irritable temper was his schoolmate, Allan Ray. He was delighted to get Frank into a passion; and enjoyed his petulant answers, and the knitting of his fair brow when he had succeeded in doing so, as if it had been the pleasantest thing in the world. So many schemes of teasing were put in operation to tor-

ment the sensitive boy, that at last a positive feeling of dislike began to grow in his mind towards his schoolfellow.

Frank thought of all this as he walked slowly to school.

"I do not really hate Allan, I hope," he said to himself; "but I am afraid I shall, if he keeps on being so disagreeable, and making me all the time angry. But I know it isn't right. God's word says: 'He that hateth his brother is a murderer; and no murderer hath eternal life.' That would be dreadful. I must try not to be angry. I *will* try to be kind and forgiving."

In the strength of this good resolution Frank mended his pace; and was soon beside the school-house, and in the midst of his companions. They all received him pleasantly, with the exception of

Allan Ray and a few others, who stood a little apart enjoying something very laughable and absurd, of which Frank was evidently the object by the looks they cast at him.

He was not therefore much surprised when he entered the school room, to find his desk, which he had inadvertently left unlocked, in a mass of confusion; his papers, pens, and pencils mislaid; and the neat array of difficult sums, with which he had covered his slate the day before, entirely obliterated; and a series of ludicrous caricatures of himself occupying their place.

A little while before, Frank would have been full of wrath, and have lost no time in complaining to his teacher of the wrong. But he had not been learning Bible truth in vain for the last few

hours. The solemn words of Jesus dwelt on his mind; "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." So shading his eyes with his hand—for he felt that they were suffused with tell-tale tears—he applied himself diligently to the task of repairing his loss.

Allan was astonished. He had been so long used to a passionate outburst of temper from Frank, after one of these sallies on his part, that he almost doubted the evidence of his senses, when he saw him so quietly employed. Still more was he surprised, when, on obeying the call for recitation, Frank forbore many times to take advantage of his repeated slips; and generously allowed him to keep that place at the head of the class, the loss of which had irritated him so much on the preceding day.

Frank was still busy at his sums when another trial took place, and one more difficult to bear, because he was quite unprepared for it. One of the boys at his side had requested the loan of a sponge from Allan. As he rose to throw it past Frank, the soft wet mass fell full on his slate, already nearly covered with the fruits of his toil; and for the second time his labours were rendered vain.

Frank felt for a moment that he could scarcely bear this new trial of patience. His cheeks flushed, and his lips quivered with the words of wrath that were eager to burst from them. But the gentle voice within spoke of peace, and love, and forgiveness; and said to the stormy heart: "Be still." So after a brief struggle with himself, Frank *was* still; and

able to listen to the whispered regrets of his subdued companion—subdued by the power of *the law of kindness*—the magical influence of forbearing love.

"It was an accident this time indeed, Frank," said the penitent Allen; "I am sorry for it, and more so because recess time is so very near. What shall I do? I am not as far on in arithmetic as you, or I would offer to work the sums out again for you. I will tell the teacher it was my fault, and perhaps he will let you off."

"That will do no good, Allan," said Frank, pleasantly; for he really felt pleasant to have his schoolmate speak in such an unusually kind manner. "I shall get behind the rest if I haven't my sums ready. And there is no use in getting angry either," he added, smiling; "for that will not put them in again."

No; there is no use in getting angry. Boys and girls, did you ever think of this? Did you ever stop to consider whether indeed it will not do a world of harm, and cause a great amount of suffering, instead of not being of the least benefit to yourself or to any one else?

But Frank and Allan did what was much better. They both agreed to stay in at recess; and Allan was very quiet while Frank worked over his sums, and afterwards copied them into his book; and then they had some pleasant talk together. Frank found courage to tell Allan of his new resolution, and how well it had already worked; and Allan, who was an orphan from a distant city, and had no kind friends to take an interest in him, and tell him what was wrong in his character, promised that he would on his

part no longer indulge his teasing and mischievous disposition, but try and be kind and agreeable also. From that time the two boys were fast friends.

How much more cheerfully Frank ran home after school than on the preceding day, when, irritated and made savage by unkindness, he forgot to be kind to others!

He had just entered the house, when his sister Letty came to meet him.

"Do, Frank," she said, "come into the parlour with me. My little shell cabinet has been accidentally thrown down; and I want you to help me arrange it in order. No one but you can tell exactly how they should be placed."

At first Frank felt inclined to refuse his sister. He thought it unreasonable in her to call upon him as soon as he re-

turned from school, where besides he had no recess. His mind also was taken up with a plan he had thought of as he came along; and he wanted to secure his father's approbation of it. This was to have his schoolfellows' company on some fine day to partake of the early fruit that their garden afforded; and as the boys were for the most part school boarders, he rightly judged it would be a rare treat for them. Of course his new friend Allan was to be a principal sharer in the feast. But his sister's gentle "Do Frank, please," decided the matter.

"And besides, Frank," she said, as they went along, "I want to show Miss Brightly my shells. She is here to spend the day. You love Miss Brightly, Frank."

Yes, Frank loved Miss Brightly. All

children loved her. She was just as bright and pleasant as her name, and found her way as readily to their little hearts as a gleam of sunshine. No longer young, she did not forget—as too many do—that she had been young; and so she shared their pleasures and plays, and sympathized with their troubles;—for although mere mole-hills to the eye of experience, the trials of children are mountains to themselves. So they came to watch for her cheerful step, and listen for her pleasant voice, as for flowers and sunbeams.

And it seemed indeed that her glad presence did diffuse rays of light in the dwellings where she visited. Bright in faith; bright in hope; bright in sweet christian charity, she ever discovered a star in the gloomiest night—a silver lining

to the darkest cloud—an under current of love beneath the troubled waters of affliction.

Then she had another peculiarity—pity it should be so singular!—that of finding redeeming traits in the characters of all her neighbours—of making excuses for all their faults. So that in contrast to the old proverb: "Her tongue is no scandal," it was commonly said: "Miss Brightly's praise is no praise; for she bestows a portion on all."

It was no wonder therefore that Miss Brightly was a favourite with old and young; nor that she possessed that rare gift of winning hearts, which so many human souls thirst after in vain. Would you know the secret of her success? Her love flowed from a heart full of the love of Christ—it renounced self—it

looked not alone on its own things, but on the things of others. Not rich; not with many talents;—but those few unburied in a napkin—Miss Brightly embodied the ideal of Solomon's model woman;—"and in her tongue was the *law of kindness*."

Let us take as a specimen the conversation that Frank and his sister listened to, as they arranged the shells in their little cabinet.

"I am pleased to find that we have neighbours again in the old stone cottage," said Mrs. Elmer. "It has worn a deserted look so long, that it made me feel quite cheerful as I passed the other day, to find the windows unclosed; and its neatly kept gravel walks musical with the ringing laughter of children at play. Have you seen them, Miss Brightly? Grant, I believe, is the name?'

"O yes!" said Miss Brightly, "they are old friends of mine. Mrs. Grant and I associated as neighbours and church members for many years in the city. She is a lovely woman; and with her charming family will form another of the many attractions to this beautiful neighbourhood."

"I am so glad you know them, Miss Brightly," said Letty, looking up from her shells; "I saw such a nice little girl playing there yesterday. I think I should love her very much; she looks so sweet and mild."

"That I am sure you would, my dear," said Miss Brightly, smiling approvingly, "Mary Grant—for my friend has but one little daughter—is as charming in character as in appearance; and I know of no one I would so willingly see you make a companion of."

"Mother," rejoined Letty, "that must have been Mrs. Grant that Miss Abby Hill was speaking of. She said she was sorry she had moved here; and that she was proud and—"

"Hush! Letty," said her mother, reprovingly; "Miss Brightly does not like to listen to scandal; and besides it must be painful to hear such epithets bestowed upon a friend, even when we know it to be unmerited."

"I believe I am acquainted with all that Miss Abby said," observed Miss Brightly. "Some one made it a business to call and tell Mrs. Grant while I was there."

"And it made her very angry, didn't it, Miss Brightly?" persisted Letty.

"No, Letty. She felt it deeply, for she has a sensitive nature; but excepting

that her cheek flushed, and her voice trembled a little, when she spoke again, I should have thought she had not heard it; for she managed to turn the conversation into quite another channel. But have you heard how Miss Abby is to-day?"

"I did not hear that she was ill," said Mrs. Elmer.

"Yes; poor Miss Abby has met with a sad accident. Hurrying home from her work some nights ago, she made a misstep, and falling down a steep bank fractured her ankle in a miserable manner. As she lives alone, she will be dependent on her neighbours for assistance. I stopped this morning to offer my services; but I found Mrs. Grant and her little Mary already there. All that kindness and gentleness could do to alleviate the pain of the poor sufferer had

been already done; and Mrs. Grant, having arranged the room neatly, was busy in preparing some nourishment for her; while her little daughter stood ready to offer a helping hand."

"What kindness! what forgiveness!" said Letty, drawing closer to her friend; "and to that cross, spiteful Miss Abby too!"

"Dear Letty," said Miss Brightly, "Mrs. Grant is a follower of the meek and forgiving Saviour; and if she would in reality be like him, she must 'do more than others,' who are content with loving those who love them. Yet poor Miss Abby has had many disadvantages. Left early to struggle with the cares and perplexities of poverty, her youthful hopes blighted, and her age soured by disappointment, she has learned lessons of distrust

and hardness from the world. But I shall always think well of her, when I remember the care and attention she bestowed upon the poor blind and paralytic sister, who so long remained to share her slender means. Many times has she denied herself of necessary food, that the invalid might not want for luxuries; and when I have heard the voice that was generally so sharp, modulating itself into gentle tones to suit the ear of the sufferer, and the eye that flashed defiance on all others look lovingly on her, I have thought that Abby Hill has a heart."

"Thank you, Miss Brightly," said Mrs. Elmer, smiling, "for finding something good in poor Miss Abby. For your sake I shall always remember this, and try to think well of all my fellow creatures."

And thus they continued to converse; Miss Brightly never failing to point out some pleasant trait in every character, like the genial rays of the sun gilding even the shadows of the dark mountains.

Frank lost not a word of this. He felt fully repaid for his self-denial in obliging his sister, by hearing these new illustrations of *the law of kindness*. Nor was this his only reward. As they left the room, Letty placed in his hand a gaily coloured purse of her own knitting.

"This is for you, Frank; because you were so good as to help me. And I have pleasant news for you besides. Father is obliged to take a journey on business; and as he will be in the neighbourhood of aunt Rachel's, he thinks of taking you with him to pay a visit there."

This was very delightful news to

Frank. Aunt Rachel was his father's sister; so much older than himself that having really filled a mother's place to him, when deprived of that endearing relation, he had come to look upon her as almost possessing the maternal right. She still lived in the old homestead, where Frank's father had spent his boyhood; but while he had gone out into the world, and become acquainted with and used to its changes and forms, she remained unalterably attached to the manners and habits of her youthful days. The contrast, therefore, between the quiet old-fashioned farm-house and their own luxurious dwelling, had all the charm of novelty; and aunt Rachel being a very agreeable person besides, an invitation to visit her was always received with delight by Mr. Elmer's children.

Frank, however, received one drawback to his pleasant anticipations; Freddy was not to accompany them.

"No; mother does not think it best," returned Letty to his inquiry. "Freddy does not complain; but we have thought him not so well for some time; and she would not like him to go away unless she went too, which it is not convenient for her to do now.

Freddy not well! Frank's spirits fell immediately. He felt a slight foreboding and fear he scarcely could define why. But presently, with the happy carelessness of childhood, he put away the feeling of dread that had scarcely begun to take shape in his mind; and pleased himself with thinking how many pretty presents he should bring for little Freddy, and how nice it would be to tell him all the adventures of his journey.

## CHAPTER IV.

These subjects were fully discussed by the two little boys for some time previous to the expected day. But when at last it came—bright and beautiful notwithstanding all Frank's forebodings to the contrary—he knew not whether most to be sorry or glad, as, standing on the high step to bid him "goodbye," Freddy's little hand lingered long on his neck, and his wan soft cheek pressed closely to his. The excitement of a ride in the cars, however, soon dissipated his feelings of sadness, as they flew swiftly along like some huge winged bird, whose hoarse screams echoed through hill and valley; now

suddenly swallowed up, as it were, in some deep ravine, when the noise seemed smothered by the immense banks of earth that walled them in;—then again lightly skimming over the green summit of the hills, at whose feet crept streams of water like silver threads, while men and horses showed in the distance as if they had been the moving panorama of fairy land.

As they passed through the city to take the steamboat—for aunt Rachel's pleasant home was divided from them by the beautiful and sparkling Delaware—Frank's father made him observe how the flowing tide of population through the densely crowded streets glided smoothly along; one giving place to another, and so facilitating the daily business and pleasure of his neighbour.

"If every one should obstinately persist in maintaining his own rights," said Mr. Elmer, "without considering the convenience of his fellows, nothing but contention and ill-will would ensue; but by giving way even a little, see how smoothly and pleasantly the great mass moves along. So in all our relations in life, we must forbear and forgive; looking not alone to our own advantage, but to the good of others."

The old homestead farm, beneath whose roof-tree the early days of Mr. Elmer had been passed, was situated some miles in the interior of New Jersey. As they journeyed along in one of the light wagons of the country, Frank took great delight in recognizing the well remembered neighbourhood.

"See, father," he said, pointing across

the deep green lots that, graced with waving corn, formed natural mosaics of exquisite workmanship, "there are the woods where we went nutting the last time I was here. And just beyond is the pond that has the pretty speckled trout in. We are not far from aunt Rachel's now, father; are we?"

"No; Frank," said his father; "we shall soon see the blue smoke curling just above that last skirt of woodland."

But as they came in sight of that smoke, which seemed to bear to them a welcome, Mr. Elmer fell into a train of thought, that carried him far back to the faded past.

The old homestead! Who is there that returns to the home of his fathers, without a gush of feeling? The habits and associations of early years, that have

been lost in the rude contact with the world, seem to linger about the walls of the old tenement. Not a room but has its tender recollections—not an inch of its grounds that is not sacred to the hallowed past. Within that doorway we remember the form of our gentle mother, as she stepped lightly about the daily task;—near that window she sat and sewed;—on its bright pane is yet traced the name that has its counterpart on the white head-stone of the churchyard. Yes; we remember well that sad weeping time. One room has a shadow upon it to us; for there, where we first learned its familiar music, we laid down the name of "mother" as a relic of the dead. Her spirit yet seems to linger there; her last words awaken the old echoes: "Live to Jesus." And then come dim recol-

lections of the gathering of mourners—of the funeral hymn—of the long procession that bore away the beloved dust to its last resting place.

Another room: we were born here; and here too we trust were we born again—a new creature in Christ Jesus. Here flowed the penitential tear; here we knelt and wept with broken heart, and gave ourselves to God in a covenant never to be forgotten. Has the world and all its vanities allured us since then? Let this memorial of the past be a witness between God and our own souls.

And then the old family place: here gathered the home-circle. Father, mother, brothers, and sisters, a happy band. Where are they now? Some with their bright locks wear silver now; some are sleeping below the green sods; all are

parted. Yet unchanging as the promises of God, the dear family Bible still "lies on the stand;" and as we take "the old arm-chair," and unfold its sacred pages we seem again to listen to the loved voice of our father, as

> "He *chose* a portion with judicious care;
> And 'let us worship God' he said with solemn air."

And aunt Rachel's old farm-house! As the travellers wended their way around a hill in front of the dwelling, its form and character were well defined before they reached its immediate neighbourhood.

It was a long, low building of grey stone, the ancient looking porch stretching across the whole length, as much perhaps for shelter as for shade; this latter advantage being apparently gained by

the network of many coloured morning-glories that curtained the entrance, and festooned themselves in many gay garlands around the rude posts. A fine maple tree too sprung from the foot of the hill, and stretched long protecting shadows towards the dwelling; bringing to it in summer the cooling winds, and standing sentinel and bare-headed to the wintry storms.

Within a circle made by its twisted roots there bubbled up a clear fountain;—one of those sparkling living streams that seem to bring coolness to the burning lip in fever dreams. A rustic milk-shed thatched with straw was supplied from its fulness; and the shining pans and snow-white wooden pails, with their bright metal bands glancing in the sunlight, were displayed on a low bench at its side.

A neat white picket fence enclosed the lawn; where only roses and lilac bushes were allowed to grow; if we except what is generally so undeservedly overlooked,—the pure fragrant clover blossoms that dotted the green sward like snow-drops.

But the garden! that was aunt Rachel's especial pride. There were her beautifully kept beds of choicest vegetables, yielding fresh and generous supplies for daily use;—clusters of sweet-smelling herbs, reminding one so forcibly of the dainty dishes they were intended to season;—pale stalks of lavender and crimson-blossomed bergamot, that were destined to rest between the folds of fine linen that strewed the bleaching place.

Then the flowers that formed what aunt Rachel called her "posey bed:" no costly exotic bloomed among them.

Not even dahlias or petunias, that in other places have been respectable denizens of the soil. Aunt Rachel clung to old fashioned flowers: marigolds, four o'clocks, ladies' slippers, with many other time-honoured worthies, were annually seeded in; while columbines, pinks, sweet williams, and the pure white lily, by turns blossomed and faded away. And for autumnal display there were clusters of star-eyed asters yet to bloom; and within the shelter of the porch, in crevices dug out among the stained flags that formed its pavement, were bunches of the sweet chrysanthemum, that lingers on even into the lap of the winter.

Nor must we forget in this favoured list, the tall rows of sun-flowers that leaned over the garden pales; as if watching the decline of the bright orb from

which they derived their name. Great delights were those to aunt Rachel, for they were both useful and ornamental, she said; a fact which was amply proved by the plump condition of the feathered flock which were fed from their abundant stores.

Within the doorway stood aunt Rachel, her knitting work in hand; for she had been attracted from her usual seat by the sound of approaching wheels. She was a fine specimen of lovely old age, gracefully declining, not forced down the declivity of life. Her white hair was parted in wavy folds beneath her close crimped cap; her mouth despoiled of its youthful pearls, but not wanting in sunny smiles.

She received the travellers with a true welcome—a courtesy, not the exclusive

property of wealth or station; and led them, not to the company-keeping room, for that was too stiff and ceremonious for such dear relatives, but to the ample kitchen, where the evening meal was already spread on the hospitable board; and smiling old Margery, her well-tried friend more than domestic, stood with a fresh greeting.

No bustle or confusion was made. Two more plates were set on the snow-white cloth, and all was ready. What a delicious meal was that to Frank! The sweet home-made bread—the golden butter—the rich, thick cream—and the honey dripping in amber streams from the white combs, by turns claimed his attention.

When he had at last fully satisfied his appetite, he took possession of the com-

fortable chintz-covered sofa that offered so commodious a resting place to his wearied limbs, and occupied himself in gazing around the wide apartment; while his father and aunt Rachel talked about other days and well-remembered friends. That dear old familiar kitchen! Its ample walls and even its floor well covered with paint; besides that a snug recess near a bay window, which was aunt Rachel's favourite nook, boasted a square of neat home-made carpeting. Into the raised window a stray branch of white jessamine had wandered, and shed a delicious perfume from its starry blossoms. Her Bible lay open on the little work stand, and on its pages her spectacles were placed for a marker; that touching reminder of the period for which the psalmist petitions: "Cast me not off in

the time of old age: forsake me not when my strength faileth."

There also was her high-backed rocker, its arms and cushioned seat quaintly covered with many-shaped patches of gaily-coloured calico. And there too was the ancient clock; a piece of furniture that Frank remembered in more childish days, as having inspired him with a feeling of awe nearly akin to fear.

There it stood;—its heavy walnut case adorned with grotesque carvings of grim figures and faces, as if designed to guard some mysterious treasure within. And there it had stood for nearly a century; still beating its monotonous round, while the pulse of the hand that fashioned it was silent for ever. It had told the welcome coming of baby faces and bright eyes into the home circle;—it had been

the great plaything and wonder of their childhood;—they had changed—or gone away—or slept with their fathers—and still those unvarying fingers moved on, like the ceaseless tide of life carrying time into eternity.

On the opposite side of this wide kitchen, an immense old-fashioned fireplace occupied the whole length of the apartment. It was ample enough to shelter all the family within its capacious mouth; and the comfortable settles that adorned each end showed that such was its design. But instead of the huge logs that in winter were all a-blaze on the cheerful old hearth, a subdued summer twinkle of firelight lay spent there; its office having passed away with the murmurs of the steaming tea-kettle. The articles on that side were all of

domestic comfort and utility. A well-filled dresser with rows of shining pewter; a kneading trough, with its moulding board as white as the biscuits that were fashioned on it; and, although not a fixture in the scene, the bright features of old Margery, as she moved briskly about her evening work, made by no means a disagreeable addition to it.

Frank gazed on all these, until gradually the picture faded, and he was in the world of dreams. He was aroused by his father's touch: it was the hour for evening worship.

O hallowed time! when, the cares of the world put by, the soul seeks communion with the skies. Then it mounts up as on angels' wings, and takes a glance at that happy home it is longing for, and those blest employments it hopes to share in.

After Mr. Elmer had read a chapter, they sung one of those plaintive old tunes, which once learned in childhood linger for a life-time memory, and come back when years have fled, thrilling every nerve and fibre of the heart.

Why is it that they who gather thus so seldom sing the songs of Zion? Is it that the world steals too much time for this delightful service? Why, the hushed babe on its mother's bosom will learn the sooner of Jesus—those sweet tones will touch the wayward heart of youth—and as old age creeps on, we love to strike the lower key notes of that anthem, which they sing who are before the throne of God and the Lamb.

Thus sung old Scotland's "noble army of martyrs;" and fresh and fragrant as

their own mountain heather, come down to us those dear old tunes, telling of "the church in the wilderness;" when gathered in the shadows of the green hill sides, with only the blue sky for the dome of their mighty cathredal, or hidden away in caves and silent glens, they strove for that rich inheritance—"freedom to worship God."

## CHAPTER V.

Frank spent many delightful hours during the week of his father's absence. There were so many pleasant employments to engage in, that he wondered, as each day came to a close, how it had glided so rapidly away. When he had tired himself with helping old Margery in the garden; or rambling through the sweet-scented woods; or following the steps of the labourers in the newly-mown hay fields, he would take a seat in aunt Rachel's corner, and coax her into telling him a story.

He had confided to her very soon the history of his late troubles, and the

resolutions he had made to amend his fault; and aunt Rachel had kindly encouraged him in doing so. She showed him how much unhappiness to ourselves and others springs from these daily acts of unkindness and ill temper; and to illustrate her words, and impress them more deeply on Frank's memory, she related to him the following little narrative, which may be called

## AUNT RACHEL'S STORY.

About a mile from hence, and on the farther side of a large creek which forms the boundary line between this and the adjoining township, there is a considerable stretch of dark pine woods, which in the space of many miles contains but one dwelling.

This of itself would be sufficient to give a solitary character to the place; but there are other circumstances which tend to make the scene one of more than ordinary gloom. None who pass there can fail to remark the air of discomfort that prevails throughout. The house, originally a strong and well-built one, seems to have the hand of decay pressing upon it. More than one of its many chimneys have fallen: and the thin blue smoke that slowly curls from the only upright one that remains, bears no hospitable welcome to the weary traveller. The windows are for the most part closed, and the doors also; and the little pathway that leads through the yard is overgrown with weeds and moss as if seldom used. No flowers—that natural, graceful drapery of country homes—are cultivated

there; and those of other years have become wild and luxuriant, and make the place more desolate than ever. The voices of merry children are unheard; and even the melancholy looking domestic fowls—that in other places give life and character to the scene—appear to partake of the general ban, and seek their food in silence. The only sounds that are heard are the plaintive whispers of the dark pine trees, as they stoop their feathery branches over the dwelling; and the sullen murmurs of the creek, as it swells and surges with the wintry storms.

Over this creek is a public thoroughfare, and a substantial stone causeway has been erected there for the convenience of passengers; but further down the stream, and in the immediate neighbourhood of the solitary house, there are

the ruins of an old log bridge, the timbers partly hidden in the waters, and all that is visible green with damp and rotten with age. This place has long been shunned and deserted by those who are acquainted with the circumstances of my story; and, as will be seen, it has much to do with the universal sadness that prevails.

But the house in the pine woods had not always a gloomy appearance. It was newly finished, and well covered with a coat of shining paint, its interior being bright with stores of household comforts, when Seth Ryan moved there with his young and pretty wife. She was a thrifty, managing woman, and kept the place in nice order.

No litter was allowed within doors or without; no windows were so brightly

polished—no floors so neatly scrubbed and sanded as hers. But with all her cleanliness—and cleanliness is a virtue when joined to godliness—she wanted that charm which makes of the poorest hovel a palace—the sunrays of smiles, and the music of kind and pleasant words.

So Seth Ryan became a moody and discontented man; although he had a well-ordered house, and throve in worldly possessions. The fields that he tilled so diligently brought in wealth and plenty; but happiness is not so cheaply purchased, and so the passing years beheld it farther than ever from his grasp. Even when one little brown head after another came to peep out from between the shafts of the old pine trees, they failed to bring sunshine into the dwelling.

Instead of the "babe in the house

being a well-spring of pleasure," the added cares of its helplessness brought trouble to one who had taught herself to look only on the shady side of life. It must be "brought up"—that was but reasonable—but in such fashion that there should be no reason to say in after years,

> "How oft, heart-sick and sore,
> I've wished I were once more
> A little child!"

The tiny caressing hands were often put rudely by; the soft cheek reddened with harsher touches than the sunbeams gave. What wonder then that the little ones grew up to imitate the angry tones and looks of their parents—to exchange with each other the passionate blows that were the natural vent to their unrenewed tempers!

And this was the real secret of all their unhappiness. Seth Ryan and his wife had never learned of Jesus to be mild and forbearing. They had never had such an insight into their own sinful hearts, as to see that they were totally unable of themselves to do any good thing, and repair to an Almighty Helper. They felt badly after a more than usually bitter experience of this "battle of life;" but they were too proud to ask forgiveness of each other; and they thought not that they were offending a gracious God. Nor did it ever occur to them that their children might be "provoked to wrath;" and that kind words and cheerful looks "do good like a medicine."

The Bible was laid in its place upon their book shelf; but its precepts, having gained no place in their hearts, were not

received as "household words" by their children. They heard but little of the blessed Saviour, who loved little ones like them; their ears were not greeted with the simple old melodies, with which mothers lull their babies to sweetest slumbers.

Years passed on. The two boys, Richard and Hugh, were well grown lads of twelve and ten, and shared their father's labours. Two little girls still younger kept with their mother in the house. She had grown a wiser but still a sad woman. Coming too late to her right mind, she saw her sins visited upon her children, but not in season to repair the injury. She had repented deeply of her own transgressions, and sought mercy at the foot of the cross; but she felt that with her own hands she had cast the

mould that formed their characters, and that they had hardened under its influence. Often too did the old temper prevail, and harsh and unkind words were heard, followed by bitter repentings and ill-judged indulgence.

The two lads were not altogether alike in temper. Hugh was of a milder mood; and, had he been placed in different circumstances, might have become a gentle and loving boy. But Richard was violent and overbearing; and the two came into such frequent antagonism, that they were seldom together without a serious quarrel. One of these had been their unhappy employment, as, late on a bright autumn evening, they entered the home path from the village school. As they came within the lengthening shadows of the pines, their father emerged from a

clearing on the opposite side; his sleek oxen and heavy cart burdened with a load of golden-eared corn. The boys had been too loud and eager in dispute to hear their father, until he called sharply to them.

"Come Richard—come Hugh. What are you quarrelling about? Bear a hand with these bars, and help me to unload."

One only turned to obey; it was Hugh. Richard walked slowly on to the house. The father called after him in vain.

"He says he won't, father," said Hugh quickly. "He told me so as we came along."

"I'll see if he won't," said the excited parent; and his heavy ox-whip was soon laid upon the shoulders of the offender. Strength and right prevailed, but there was sullenness and ill-will in all hearts,

as the smiling ears of corn were laid away in the snug crib; and the sun went down on their wrath.

Meanwhile the house windows were sending forth a pleasant light; and a bright blaze shot out from the wide hearth, where the mother was preparing a nice supper with her old skilfulness. A fine pile of well browned cakes stood smoking before the fire; and the ample griddle was receiving fresh supplies as it turned them forth. The coffee steamed with a grateful bubbling noise; and a clean neatly set table stood ready in one corner to receive the comfortable meal. But there was a shadow there.

Little Lucy the youngest was sitting on the floor, swelling with rage and grief; the tears coursing rapidly down her brown cheeks, as she sent angry

glances alternately at her mother and a rag baby, which was placed high out of her reach among the shining brasses and irons of the mantel-shelf. The doll appeared to participate in her sorrow, as its stiff straight arms were stretched out in mimic distress.

"There—that's what you get for quarrelling with Jane. Keep still now, or you don't have any supper, I promise you," said the mother.

"I don't like Jane or you either," cried the naughty child. "I hate every body; and when I grow up I won't live here any more."

A smart slap was the answer to this; and the screams and anger raged fiercer.

"You need not look so pleased, Miss Jane," said the now thoroughly aroused mother, as she observed the triumphant

countenance of her other daughter; "it may be your turn next; so you had better keep straight."

Jane walked sullenly away, muttering to herself the common complaint of undutiful children, "Mother is always scolding;" and in the midst of dark and stern looks the farmer entered.

"What! quarrelling without and quarrelling within too, I believe," he said in a discontented tone; "always in the dumps it seems to me."

Yes; but that remark did not mend matters at all. A pleasant word perhaps might have done it; a kind look might have chased away that frown from the brow. But both were wanting. Neither were there any of these little offices of tenderness and good-will that form the golden chain of the home-circle. The

links had been broken early in life, and they had never been gathered up again.

So Seth Ryan did not offer to bring in the heavy water pail from the spring for his weary wife; did not renew the fire with nice skill when he saw she fretted because its blaze had waned; and when they surrounded their silent meal—unblessed, unthanked for—he did not notice that she looked tired, nor speak cheerily to lighten her burdens.

And the poor woman was weary—weary of life. She felt like one who has brought up a brood of young lions, and knows not how to tame them. And she felt that sharpest sting of all—thankless and wayward children. Again and again she resolved to do better—to be more forbearing, and thus try to win them back to gentleness and peace; while tears

—heart tears—fell on the fingers that moved so busily through her evening work. And Richard and Hugh, unforgiving, unreconciled, went silently and sullenly to rest.

Time went on, and brought its usual changes. The younger members of the household increased in strength and stature; while the elder, as they declined in years, experienced but little of that glory which should crown the evening of life. Richard and Hugh still strove for the mastery, and were constantly coming into collision. In one of their almost daily strifes, their angry passions led them into a fierce personal encounter, which resulted in Richard's being brought to the ground, with such violence and with so little signs of life, that Hugh really thought himself his brother's mur-

derer; and precipitately fled, as he supposed, from the punishment of his crime.

Scarcely knowing what course to take, he hurried on until he reached the river; where he fell in with a party of sailors from a vessel about to leave port, and at once concluded to offer himself as their companion for the distant voyage. For a long time his parents thought he had met with an untimely grave; and it was not until some years after, and when Seth Ryan had passed away from earth, that tidings came from the wanderer, asking forgiveness and remembrance. He had learned that his brother still lived; and he was coming home again, he hoped a penitent and a better man.

The mother shed tears of joy over her prodigal; but Richard drew his breath harder, and the words came hissing through his clenched teeth:

"I never will forgive him—never."

* * * It is again a night scene at the old house in the pines. Richard and his mother live there alone; for the daughters have left the dwelling which they shadowed with their presence, and have gone to make other homes as unloving as their own.

A wild storm is up in the woods, and wails through the dry branches of the surging trees; while the creek, dark and swollen with the tempest of wind and rain, rushes angrily along. But there is no want of comfort within doors, so far as warmth and plenty can afford it. The wide apartment is redolent of light and heat, from the huge fire of pine-knots that are heaped on the glowing hearth. Richard and a young boy whom he has hired for a farm help are seated by the

table at a late supper, for they have just come in; and a part of their garments, drenched and soiled, are hanging by the fire to dry, while streams of muddy water are dripping from them over the neat white floor. Of old this negligence would have been a subject of contention, but the mother has lost much of her ancient spirit; and now, with more care-marks on her brow than time has left, is sitting near the blazing hearth, her hands employed with their accustomed diligence, but her thoughts seemingly far away.

"What a dreadful night it is!" she said, speaking more to herself than to those around her; "these storms always make me think of poor Hugh. Perhaps he is coming home. Why, what makes me so forgetful?" she sharply and sud-

denly exclaimed, "this was the day he said he should come. Richard, wasn't your brother to be here to-day?"

The young man had finished his supper; and now sat by the fire with his sullen brow sunk in his hands.

He lifted up his face with a stern look.

"Have I not told you to mention him no more in my hearing? I have no brother."

"O Richard, how can you be so cruel?" sighed the poor woman; "one mother bore ye, and in one cradle ye were both nursed. How can you ask forgiveness from God, when you are so hard and relentless yourself?"

Richard made no reply; and the mother began after a while to dispose of the remnants of the repast, replacing the dishes and cloth with others of a finer

and better appearance. When she had arranged all to her satisfaction, filled the kettle anew, and hung it over the clear blaze, and drawn many a hidden luxury from the deep recesses of her cupboard, she tremblingly took her place by the window, and pressed her brow against its cold damp panes, in fruitless endeavours to peer out into the stormy night.

"He has been belated," she said at last; "perhaps he has lost his way in this beating wind and rain." A sudden thought struck her. "The old ruined bridge," she exclaimed; "he will surely come that way, for he knows not of the other. Richard, did you not promise to have it mended? You knew he would take that course."

"It *is* mended," said the son, shortly; "I saw to that."

Mark, the young farm help, had taken a low seat within the wide chimney; and was busily engaged in roasting nuts which he drew forth from his capacious pockets. He looked up astonished.

"Mended!" he exclaimed; "why, I thought it was anything else but that. Look ye, mistress, we have been up to our knees in water, sawing and pulling away the old timbers. That is why our clothes are so wet. I don't believe there is a plank will bear the weight of a cat —let alone a man's."

A fierce blow and a torrent of abuse put a stop to further revealings; but there was need of no more. The mother saw at once the guilty intentions of her unhappy son; and pale and shaking, the two stood for some minutes silently and shudderingly regarding each other.

Just then a sudden cry was heard—the cry of some one in the extremity of distress. It sounded wild and mournful; mingled with the wailing voices of the winds, as they sighed through the dark branches of the creaking pines.

"It is Hugh!" cried the mother—"O Richard! it is your poor brother struggling with the deep waters of the flood. Will you stay and let him perish? Bring the lantern, Mark," she called with a shrill voice to the boy; "I will go myself; am I not his mother?"

Scarcely waiting for the help she had asked, the poor woman rushed forth into the fierce dark night, and strove wildly with the raging elements. The tempest beat her back; the heavy branches torn off by the whirlwind fell all around her, and threatened destruction. But she

could hear that mournful cry ever becoming fainter and more stifled—and she struggled on. Once she fell with violence, and lay stunned and breathless unable to proceed; then her garments became tangled in the thorny underwood, but she tore them recklessly away, and reached the bridge at last to gaze in vain down into the troubled waters. They rushed tumultuously along—*but the voice had gone.* She gazed up and down the stream. She saw that the bridge had been trusted to, and treacherously given way; but the victim had disappeared. She pursued the search for some time along the turbulent course of the stream, and was returning with more hopeful feelings, when on again coming in sight of the ruined bridge, she caught a view of something—O horror! that pale face—

those listless, outstretched limbs, no longer struggling with the waters—it was her long-lost son!

The mother stood for one moment paralyzed; and then dashed fearlessly into the stream, and clasped the stiffened form in her arms. Had it not been borne on her bosom when a babe? She scarce felt that it had increased in size and weight, as she carried it again by the well-worn path to the dwelling.

All was silent and deserted there. Richard had fled conscience-stricken; and the boy, affrighted in the wild loneliness, had gone to seek shelter at some neighbouring farm house. And all that long, long night the mother was alone with her dead.

At first she would not give up the hope that there might be a spark of life

remaining; and regardless of her own wet garments, and bruised and bleeding limbs, she knelt long at his side, trying every means to restore animation. But the lifeless arms and drooping head still hung heavily down from the settle where she had laid him; and, on lifting the damp locks from his pale forehead, she saw a fearful wound there, which told her well that in battling with the fierce waters, he had struck against the hidden timbers of the ruined bridge, and had sunk at once without sense or motion.

Then a wild, agonizing sob came up from the crushed heart of the mother. "Hugh—Hughie—my own dear Hugh!" she cried, for he was dear to her. How well she remembered, in the slow watches of that miserable night, the winning, childish ways that she had so often

turned away from. She thought of the times when he used to bring her flowers—so beautiful, he said—and she had called them trash and worthless, and forbade him to bring such litter into her well kept house. And once he had stolen behind her as she sat unheeding, and twisting a crimson blossom in her dark hair, whispered—"Mother's pretty now." So on that floor where the firelight cast strange shadows, and where once he moved in the unconscious grace of childhood, she laid herself down despairing, and wishing that she might die with him.

And the time came when she *was* laid by his side in the quiet churchyard; but the miserable cause of her sorrow yet lives—a lone and stricken man. Richard still inhabits the desolate dwelling in the pines. There were strange things

said of him; but too little evidence besides suspicion to bring on a legal investigation. Yet men looked coldly on him, and shunned his company; and conscience, "the worm that never dies," pursued him relentlessly. His business affairs suffered—he became poor—and gradually his possessions passed into other hands. A widowed sister came to share the little he had left of wealth or shelter, but they who cherished no love in brighter days, can scarce expect to feel it now. So they live friendless and desolate—the mark that was set on Cain burning upon his brow—and the curse of Him who said "Thou shalt do no murder," resting upon his soul.

## CHAPTER VI.

"Thus you see, dear Frank," said aunt Rachel, as she concluded her melancholy story, "that hatred, ill-will, and malice, are not the growth of a day. A trifling quarrel will produce dislike and suspicion; their constant repetition severs wider the bond of union; and thus that which was at first but an angry word, blown into a fiercer flame by the hot breath of contention, may, as your little hymn so quaintly but forcibly expresses it,

"—— grow to clubs and naked swords;
To murder and to death."

And in the same order of progression are gentle influences on the heart and

actions. To be habitually kind makes one tender-hearted and forgiving; just in the language of the beautiful text you read me this morning, Frank. And I need not say when we are the happier."

"No indeed, aunt Rachel," said Frank, "I know I am never happy when I am ill-tempered; and every body else seems to feel unpleasantly too. But when I am kind and obliging, father looks happy, and mother too; and little Freddy smiles so sweetly. Dear little Freddy! I am sorry I was ever cross to him. When I go home again, I hope I shall act very differently."

Poor Frank! how little he knew that his good resolutions, so far as regarded his gentle brother, were made too late! that his young frail life was even then fast fading out—his slender hold on earth

loosening with every breath! When his father came to take him home, he brought these sorrowful tidings; and it was added that no time should be lost in their return, as the disease with which the child had been attacked threatened very soon to bring his short life to a close. So Mr. Elmer, and Frank, and kind aunt Rachel—for she would also accompany them to the house of mourning—began at once their sad journey.

Sad indeed it was to Frank, who had anticipated this return with so much pleasure. And when they drew near to their own home, and no little Freddy with pale but happy face came to meet them—no silvery voice answered to theirs, as they passed through the silent hall—he realized too well the extent of his loss.

Silent was the dwelling and deserted, for all were gathered in that one shaded room: gathered to witness the mysterious parting of the soul from its clay tenement—the birth of a renewed spirit into the realms of bliss. The mother pressed nearest to the little crib, as if she would withhold her darling thus from the icy clasp of death. And in that deep slumber that so closely resembles the long last sleep, the child lay very still and quiet. But in his pale sunken face and on his high spiritual brow, the dread messenger had set his sign—never to be mistaken. It was very near, then, that awful moment that should lift the veil between time and eternity. So thought they all as they silently closed in around the little bed—their footfalls hushed—their very breath unconsciously suspended; as if they felt

the near presence of unseen wings—heard, for a brief moment, the murmur of that pure river of the water of life that proceedeth from the throne of God.

But Frank's ardent feelings were not to be controlled. He had seen within the little wan hand, that lay so passive there and fair, a glimpse of one of Freddy's own cluster-roses—pale and beautiful like him, as early withered. The child had asked for it in one of his intervals from pain; and it was still clasped in his dying fingers—a touching remembrance to Frank of his own unkindness, and his brother's forgiving love.

It was piteous to hear in that silent room the wailing voice of the heart-stricken boy, as he threw himself down by the bed of death, and cried with bitter tears.

"O Freddy, speak to me once more—tell me that you love me."

The parted lips of the child quivered—one moment his eyelids fluttered—and a sigh heaved audibly from his almost silent breast. He strove to speak once more. There was an effort to recall earth, but it failed.

"I love—yes—I love Jesus the Saviour."

O mysterious bond that unites the believer to Christ! "Whom having not seen ye love: in whom though now ye see him not, yet believing ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." And though earthly ties may fail, and earthly love pass; and the mind shattered by disease or time answers no longer to their familiar tones; yet even then—"how sweet the name of Jesus sounds in a believer's ear!"

When next the weeping Frank looked on his little brother, there was another change. They told him Freddy was happy then—that he was an angel—gone to be with Jesus who loved little children, and said: "Suffer them to come unto me." But on that lifeless form—on that marble breast—those clay-cold features—was set that mark which is the inheritance of the fall: "the wages of sin is death." Yet the smiling lips—the peaceful happy brow, spoke another language. What said they? "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Let me add a few words to the history of Frank. If you would not share his feelings of regret when he stood by the coffined form of his little brother—for to

a sensitive mind there is no sorrow more poignant than the thought that we have been unkind to the dear ones that have left us—cherish love and affection for them now. Should you bend over the graves of your friends, as Frank did over the little green mound above whose white headstone he had planted that pale cluster-rose, which was to have been a memorial of living love—let there be no remorse mingled with the tears which flow so freely there.

You may say, this hard word or that unkind action is but a trifle. Yes; but trifles summed up together make a vast amount. The loftiest peak that towers to the heavens is but an accumulation of small atoms; the ocean in its vastness may be resolved into drops. A spark of fire is a very little thing; but if combus-

tible matter be laid to it, how wide the desolation that ensues! Houses, cities, and human life are sacrificed to a destroyer, that, in its beginning, an infant's finger might have crushed.

So the fierce quarrels and contentions of the world originate in trifles—in drops it may be said—for the wise man likens strife to a continual dropping in a very rainy day. If this unceasing dropping will wear out stones—if the unremitting fall of these minute particles of water, causes such exquisite torture to the brain as it is said to do—what suffering must the continual repetition of unkindness give to the feeling mind!

The same inspired penman also warns us to "leave off contention before it be meddled with;" for "it is in the beginning like the letting forth of water."

First a slight breach is made in the wide levee that guards the banks of a mighty river—a pebble or a straw might have filled the crevice, but it is unnoticed;—and soon not only a drop but streams run in—the embankment crumbles, and the whole country is inundated. So there is first an angry word—it is followed by others—it widens the breach—the peace of families is broken up—and life-long sorrow is often the sad consequence.

In the foregoing narrative I have endeavoured to show you that forgiveness of great injuries must have its rise in habitual acts of kindness and forbearance; such as we have an opportunity of performing every day of our lives. For "pleasant words are as an honeycomb; sweet to the soul, and health to the bones." Prov. xvi. 24.

These seventy times seven offices of love, who has them not in his power to offer? They will bring a blessing on the soul; and under their softening influence our minds will be prepared, in the sweet exercise of christian charity, to forgive, if we have been trespassed against in matters of greater importance.

And one word about forgiveness of injuries. It is common to say: "I will forgive; but I cannot forget." True—you cannot help the exercise of memory, while that power of the mind is in force. But you can act as if you did forget; not brood over the evil either fancied or real. Try to put it away from your mind and thoughts, and it will soon lose its importance. Who is it that saith: "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins?" O

believer! for whom Christ died, who has forgiven all your trespasses, blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; will you be hard and unforgiving to those who have offended you? Heirs of the same grace—partaking at the same sacramental board of the emblems of forgiving love—and looking forward to a dwelling together in the Father's house above—let this same mind of forgiveness be in you that was also in Christ Jesus. And if his love and his meekness dwell in your hearts, you will be willing to say; "FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS, AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS."